

AMENDED IN SENATE MAY 27, 2014

**SENATE BILL**

**No. 1425**

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**Introduced by Senator Block**

February 21, 2014

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An act to add Article 1.7 (commencing with Section 78025) to Chapter 1 of Part 48 of Division 7 of Title 3 of the Education Code, relating to community colleges.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1425, as amended, Block. Community colleges: retroactive awarding of degrees.

(1) Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges, under the administration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, as one of the segments of the public postsecondary education in this state. Existing law establishes community college districts throughout the state, and authorizes those districts to provide instruction at community college campuses.

*This bill, prior to the beginning of the spring term of each academic year, and in accord with a specified timetable, would require each community college district with a specified Internet-accessible automatic degree audit system in place to conduct a one-time inquiry as the system is put in place. That inquiry would seek to identify the students who have completed the required units to receive a degree or certificate, or who have completed the transfer requirements of the California State University or the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum, in up to 12 of the highest demand majors, as determined by each community college district, during the previous 2 academic years.*

*The bill would require each affected community college campus to notify the students identified under the bill as eligible to receive a degree or certificate that they are eligible for the degree or certificate. The bill would provide that these students would have the choice of opting out or receiving the degree or certificate.*

The bill would require the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges to ~~develop or~~ identify and procure a commercially available utility to conduct systemwide automatic degree audits that would enable community college student services staff to monitor student progress toward completion of a certificate or degree, or the credits required to meet the transfer requirements of the California State University or the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum. *The bill would require the chancellor's office to oversee the implementation of the bill in accordance with a timetable that would require all campuses of the California Community Colleges to have the automatic degree audit system in place by December 31, 2017, as specified.*

~~The bill would require each community college campus, before the beginning of an academic year, to conduct an inquiry, using the online degree audit system that would be created under the bill, to identify the students or former students who are within 12 semester units or 18 quarter units of completing the requirements for a certificate, degree, or transfer, as prescribed. The bill would require community college campus staff to notify those students or former students of the courses needed to complete those requirements.~~

~~The bill would require that certificates or degrees be awarded retroactively to students or former students who are found, pursuant to an audit of credits earned in the 5 academic years immediately preceding the 2015–16 academic year, to have met requirements for those certificates or degrees, if the students choose to receive them.~~

The bill would require the ~~chancellor~~ Legislative Analyst's Office to submit a report to the Legislature and the Governor on the progress of the implementation of the retroactive degree awarding and online degree audit system on or before December 31, 2017, and on or before December 31 ~~of each year~~ every 3 years thereafter.

This bill would not be operative until the board of governors certifies that sufficient funds have been received from state, federal, or private sources to implement the online degree audit system that would be created under the bill.

Because this bill would impose new duties on community college districts, it would constitute a state-mandated local program.

(2) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
State-mandated local program: yes.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the  
2 following:

3 (1) California is falling behind in producing the necessary  
4 postsecondary education to ensure our state's prosperity and  
5 opportunities for individuals in the 21st century.

6 (2) California faces a degree and certificate gap, and is projected  
7 to need one million more workers with bachelor's degrees and an  
8 additional 1.3 million workers with associate degrees or certificates  
9 by 2025. Today, one in every four jobs requires at least an associate  
10 degree.

11 (3) In the near future, one in every three jobs will require at  
12 least an associate degree. Failure to make significant improvements  
13 in degree completion will result in a less productive economy,  
14 lower incomes for residents, less tax revenue for the state, and  
15 more dependence on social services. ~~Awarding retroactive associate~~  
16 ~~degrees to the approximately 250,000 students whose records~~  
17 ~~qualify them for degrees but who never received those degrees,~~  
18 ~~and encouraging other students to return to school by making them~~  
19 ~~aware that they are close to completing their associate degree, will~~  
20 ~~mitigate this projected degree shortage.~~

21 (4) The California Community Colleges are the state's largest  
22 workforce provider, offering associate degrees and short-term job  
23 training certificates in more than 175 different fields.

24 ~~(5) In community colleges across the country, approximately~~  
25 ~~16 percent of the students in each cohort have either qualified for~~  
26 ~~a degree but never received it, or are within 12 semester units of~~  
27 ~~an associate degree and have left the system. This percentage~~

1 ~~represents approximately 250,000 students in the California~~  
2 ~~Community Colleges system.~~

3 ~~(6)~~

4 (5) Meeting the current and future need for higher education  
5 requires that postsecondary institutions improve their success rates  
6 with current students and attract, and graduate, individuals from  
7 groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in  
8 postsecondary education.

9 ~~(7)~~

10 (6) Degree audit systems efficiently support student persistence  
11 and success efforts, and thereby save money for the institutions in  
12 the longer term. This will be especially true of a degree audit  
13 system that is centralized at the Chancellor's Office of the  
14 California Community Colleges and paired with the online  
15 educational planner that is being developed as part of the  
16 Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012.

17 ~~(8)~~

18 (7) In California, ~~only about one-third~~ *less than one-fifth* of  
19 community colleges have online degree audit systems that can be  
20 used to inform their students about their progress, leaving the  
21 remainder of the state's 112 community colleges without a  
22 mechanism to identify already earned degrees.

23 ~~(9)~~

24 (8) As movement toward performance-based budgeting  
25 continues, retroactive degree awarding and degree audit systems  
26 better position an institution to improve student outcomes.

27 ~~(10)~~

28 (9) Earning a certificate or degree from a community college  
29 doubles an individual's chance of obtaining a job. At a time when  
30 unemployment rates are nearly 9 percent, certificates and degrees  
31 are all the more valuable.

32 ~~(11)~~

33 (10) Earning a degree or certificate from a California community  
34 college, on average, nearly doubles an individual's earnings within  
35 three years, from \$25,600 to \$45,571.

36 ~~(12)~~

37 (11) A national effort, Project Win-Win, is tackling this issue  
38 in nine other states and is showing promising results. This project  
39 introduces degree audit systems at colleges to accomplish ~~all~~ *both*  
40 of the following:

1 (A) Award degrees retroactively.

2 ~~(B) Identify and bring back students who are marginally short~~  
3 ~~of an associate degree to complete it.~~

4 ~~(C)~~

5 (B) Ensure that, moving forward, students have real-time  
6 information about their progress toward obtaining a degree.

7 (b) Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature to do all of the  
8 following:

9 (1) Build on national and local efforts to identify current or  
10 former students who are eligible ~~or nearly eligible~~ to obtain their  
11 certificate or degree, ~~or to attain the necessary credits for transfer,~~  
12 ~~and notify those students, as appropriate.~~

13 (2) Award degrees and certificates retroactively to those students  
14 who have completed degree or certificate requirements.

15 (3) Establish a central auditing system at the California  
16 Community Colleges that enables individual community colleges  
17 to audit student records, identify the students who are eligible ~~or~~  
18 ~~nearly eligible~~ for a certificate or degree, and notify these students  
19 of this valuable information.

20 SEC. 2. Article 1.7 (commencing with Section 78025) is added  
21 to Chapter 1 of Part 48 of Division 7 of Title 3 of the Education  
22 Code, to read:

23  
24 Article 1.7. Retroactive Awarding of Degrees  
25

26 78025. (a) The board of governors shall require all community  
27 colleges to award degrees retroactively in accordance with this  
28 article.

29 (b) Prior to the beginning of the spring term of *the academic*  
30 *year, and commencing with the 2015–16 academic year for the*  
31 *first 28 campuses*, each community college ~~shall perform an district~~  
32 *shall perform a one-time inquiry as the automatic degree audit*  
33 *system required by this article is put in place at each campus,*  
34 *consistent with the timetable prescribed in Section 78026,* to  
35 identify the students who have completed the semester or quarter  
36 ~~required units required to receive a degree, degree or certificate,~~  
37 *or who have completed the California State University (CSU) or*  
38 *the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum*  
39 *(IGETC) transfer requirements in up to 12 of the highest demand*

1 *majors, as determined by each community college district, during*  
2 *the previous ~~five~~ two academic years.*

3 (c) A community college campus shall notify those students  
4 identified pursuant to subdivision (b) *as eligible to receive a degree*  
5 *or certificate* that they are eligible to receive ~~a~~ *the* degree or  
6 certificate. Those students shall have the choice to opt out or to  
7 receive the degree or certificate.

8 78026. (a) The Chancellor of the California Community  
9 Colleges shall ~~develop or~~ identify a commercially available utility  
10 to conduct systemwide automatic degree audits for these ~~purposes~~.  
11 ~~The system shall satisfy all of the following conditions:~~ *purposes,*  
12 *and procure that utility in accordance with the relevant provisions*  
13 *of the State Contract Act (Chapter 1 (commencing with Section*  
14 *10100) of Part 2 of Division 2 of the Public Contract Code). Once*  
15 *this utility is procured, the chancellor's office shall oversee the*  
16 *implementation of this article in accordance with the following*  
17 *timetable:*

18 (1) *At least 28 campuses of the California Community Colleges*  
19 *shall have the automatic degree audit system in place by December*  
20 *31, 2015.*

21 (2) *At least 56 campuses of the California Community Colleges*  
22 *shall have the automatic degree audit system in place by December*  
23 *31, 2016.*

24 (3) *All campuses of the California Community Colleges shall*  
25 *have the automatic degree audit system in place by December 31,*  
26 *2017.*

27 (b) *The automatic degree audit system procured under this*  
28 *section shall satisfy all of the following conditions:*

29 (1) It shall comply with all pertinent privacy and security  
30 considerations and requirements.

31 (2) It shall be centrally ~~housed at~~ *purchased* by the Chancellor's  
32 Office of the California Community Colleges *in order to reduce*  
33 *costs through a bulk procurement process.*

34 (3) *It shall be managed by each community college district for*  
35 *use among the campuses within each respective district.*

36 ~~(3)~~

37 (4) It shall enable community college counselors, advisors, and  
38 other student services staff to monitor student progress toward  
39 completing a degree or certificate program, or achieving the  
40 minimum requirements for CSU or IGETC transfer.

1     ~~(4)~~

2     (5) It shall be accessible to community college personnel and  
3 students through an Internet Web portal that provides a degree  
4 progress profile, generated for each student upon request, that  
5 includes all information regarding credits earned that is available  
6 in the community college's data.

7     ~~(b) Prior to the beginning of each spring term, each community~~  
8 ~~college shall perform an inquiry to identify students who are within~~  
9 ~~12 semester units or 18 quarter units of completing a degree or~~  
10 ~~certificate, or achieving the minimum requirements for CSU or~~  
11 ~~IGETC transfer.~~

12     ~~(c) A community college shall notify those students or former~~  
13 ~~students identified pursuant to subdivision (b) of the courses needed~~  
14 ~~to complete a degree, a certification, or transfer requirements.~~

15     78027. ~~(a) Each community college district, with the assistance~~  
16 ~~of the chancellor, shall study and to evaluate the effectiveness of~~  
17 ~~the retroactive degree awarding and audit program established by~~  
18 ~~this article and of any other programs or services designed to~~  
19 ~~facilitate students' completion of their educational goals and~~  
20 ~~courses of study. Notwithstanding Section 10231.5 of the~~  
21 ~~Government Code, the chancellor~~ *The Legislative Analyst's Office*  
22 ~~shall submit a report to the Legislature and the Governor on the~~  
23 ~~progress of the implementation of the retroactive degree awarding~~  
24 ~~and online degree audit system on or before December 31, 2017,~~  
25 ~~and on or before December 31 of each year~~ *every three years*  
26 ~~thereafter.~~

27     ~~(b) The report required by this section shall be submitted in~~  
28 ~~compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.~~

29     78028. ~~(a) The metrics to be determined and reported pursuant~~  
30 ~~to Section 78027 shall include, but not necessarily be limited to,~~  
31 ~~all of the following:~~

32     ~~(1)~~

33     (a) The number and percentage of community college students  
34 who were identified, ~~reenrolled,~~ and were awarded associate  
35 degrees or certificates, or who *were determined to have* completed  
36 the CSU or IGETC transfer requirements because of the degree  
37 audit system.

38     ~~(2) The average amount of time spent and number of units~~  
39 ~~earned by community college students in order to complete their~~  
40 ~~associate degree, certificate, or transfer requirements, after being~~

1 notified that they were within the 12 semester units or 18 quarter  
2 units of completion.

3 (3)

4 (b) The estimated economic benefits for the college and labor  
5 market *of the degree audit system*.

6 (4)

7 (c) Other relevant indicators of student success *resulting from*  
8 *having a degree audit system in place*.

9 ~~(b) Information specified in subdivision (a) shall be~~  
10 ~~disaggregated data, classified by ethnicity, gender, disability, age,~~  
11 ~~and socioeconomic status, to the extent this information is~~  
12 ~~available.~~

13 ~~(e) The evaluation required by Section 78027 shall include an~~  
14 ~~assessment of the effectiveness of the programs and services in~~  
15 ~~attaining at least the following objectives:~~

16 ~~(1) Identifying students within 12 semester units or 18 quarter~~  
17 ~~units of meeting the requirements for a degree or certificate or~~  
18 ~~completing the CSU or IGETC transfer requirements.~~

19 ~~(2) Assisting institutions in reenrolling these students, assessing~~  
20 ~~these students' educational needs, and identifying appropriate~~  
21 ~~course placement for these students.~~

22 ~~(3) Helping support students' successful completion of associate~~  
23 ~~degree, certificate, or transfer requirements.~~

24 ~~(4) Matching institutional resources with students' educational~~  
25 ~~needs.~~

26 ~~79029.~~

27 78029. This article shall not be operative until the board of  
28 governors certifies that sufficient funds have been received from  
29 state, federal, or private sources to implement the online degree  
30 audit system that would be created under this section. The board  
31 of governors shall prominently post this certification promptly on  
32 its Internet Web site.

33 SEC. 3. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that  
34 this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to  
35 local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made  
36 pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division  
37 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.